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TAGS: [PBTS](#) [PHSA](#) [PREL](#) [EFIS](#) [MOPS](#) [KS](#) [JA](#)
SUBJECT: DFM YUN BRIEFS DCM ON ROK-JAPAN MARITIME SURVEY
DISPUTE: KOREANS HINTING AT COMPROMISE?

REF: A. TOKYO 2098

[B](#). SEOUL 1271
[C](#). TOKYO 2154
[D](#). TOKYO 2159

Classified By: Amb. Alexander Vershbow. Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

SUMMARY AND COMMENT

[1](#)1. (C) In an April 20 meeting with the DCM, ROK DFM Yun reported that earlier in the day, South Korean Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon had told the Japanese Ambassador that (1) Japan should immediately abandon its proposed maritime survey of submarine features in waters that Tokyo and Seoul both claim as part of their EEZ; (2) the ROK would proceed at an "appropriate time" to register names for submarine features of the area with the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO); and, (3) the two sides had a "convergence of views" on resuming bilateral consultations to delineate the EEZ between them. Media reports indicate Seoul has 18 or more patrol boats conducting ship seizure drills in the area of the proposed survey. In a separate conversation, the Japanese Embassy confirmed that on April 21 Vice Foreign Minister Yachi will announce a visit to Seoul to discuss the issue and that the Japanese ships will not leave port as long as discussions continue.

[1](#)2. (C) COMMENT: Our reading of DFM Yun's briefing is that the ROK is attempting to accept most of the points of the proposed Japanese compromise (refs A and B), but Seoul does not want to be perceived as addressing the issue on Japanese terms. Hence, the ROK demand that Japan withdraw its survey ships is coupled with the position that Seoul will proceed with the names registration at "an appropriate time" and the proposal to resume discussions to delineate the EEZ. The ROK seems to be suggesting, without actually saying, that it will defer submitting the names to the IHO and will discuss the issue as part of a larger conversation on EEZ delineation. The diplomatic task for now is for the Koreans to convey to the Japanese that an "appropriate time" means after June.
END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

JAPAN RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL CONSEQUENCES

[1](#)3. (C) ROK Deputy Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se requested a meeting with the Deputy Chief of Mission on April 20 to

discuss ROK opposition to Japan's plans to conduct maritime survey operations in waters claimed by both Japan and the ROK as part of their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ). Yun noted that the ROK had held two meetings of Cabinet-level ministers to discuss the issue and that President Roh had also met with leading political figures over the matter.

14. (C) On April 19, Yun recalled, Foreign Minister Ban had publicly stressed that the Cabinet had taken a firm position against the proposed survey and reiterated that the ROK was ready for any contingency to prevent the survey from proceeding. Moreover, Ban had asserted that Japan's proposed survey was part of a series of actions by Tokyo to distort the historical record; accordingly, the ROK would undertake a comprehensive response. Calling upon Japan to abandon its proposed survey immediately, Ban had expressed hope the issue could be resolved diplomatically. If the Japanese proceeded, however, Seoul would take necessary measures in accordance with international and domestic law and Tokyo would be responsible for the consequences. Also on April 19, the National Assembly had passed a resolution calling for Japan not to proceed with the survey.

15. (C) During the morning of April 20, said Yun, Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon had called in Japanese Ambassador Oshima and reaffirmed this position. The ROK perceived the proposed Japanese survey as more than a simple maritime survey of the disputed area, but as another in a series of provocative acts. The ROK wanted Japan to be aware that this was an ongoing issue that was not related only to the question of EEZ limitations but to sensitive matters of history, particularly Japan's claims to the Dokdo/Takeshima Islands, which Japan had incorporated in the course of its past record of aggression. If Japan did not move to correct perceptions of its intentions and continued taking provocative actions,

it would pose a serious threat to amicable relations between the ROK and Japan, as well as to the peace of Northeast Asia.

Such a development would not be in the national interests of Japan.

ABANDON SURVEY, ROK PROCEEDS WITH NAMES AT APPROPRIATE TIME

16. (C) Ban demanded that Japan immediately abandon its proposed survey. If Tokyo were to proceed with its survey within the South Korean EEZ, he warned, the ROK would take all necessary measures to safeguard its sovereign rights and Japan would be responsible for the consequences. The ROK had a sovereign right to proceed with the registration of names at the IHO and would do so at an appropriate time in the future. Finally, Ban said that it would be appropriate for Seoul and Tokyo to resume discussions on the delineation of the EEZ between the two countries.

17. (C) DFM Yun told the DCM that the ROK hoped Japan would consider this message and take very judicious action. If not, Seoul "would have to do what we have to do." At the moment, the Japanese survey vessels were waiting at Sakai.

YUN: JAPANESE "UNDERSTOOD" MESSAGE

18. (C) Noting that we would welcome any progress toward the diplomatic resolution of the dispute, the DCM asked for the Japanese Ambassador's reaction. Yun responded that Ambassador Oshima appeared to understand what Foreign Minister Ban wanted to convey: that the Japanese ships must withdraw from the area immediately. The message on the IHO was also clear: the ROK was considering registering names for submarine features in the EEZ but would do so at an appropriate time. The best solution would be for the Japanese to forego their survey and engage in consultations on next steps. There appeared to be a "convergence of views," said Yun between Ban and Oshima on the desirability of resuming talks on the delineation of the EEZ.

19. (C) Yun added that the ROK was eager to resolve the issue

as quickly as possible, as "every hour, every day" that the media continued to report on the issue, it incited the anger of the Korean people. The nature of this provocation by Japan was different, said Yun, and had the potential to alter the bilateral relationship in a fundamental way.

¶10. (C) Subsequently, Japanese Embassy First Secretary Yasushi Yamamoto told poloff that Japan would continue talks with the ROK and would announce in the morning of April 21 that Vice Foreign Minister Yachi would visit South Korea to discuss the issue with ROK Vice Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan (ref A). The survey ships had not departed port and would not do so as long as talks were ongoing, he said. Yamamoto did not comment on the substance of the morning's meeting with FM Ban.

EXTENSIVE MEDIA COVERAGE CONTINUES

¶11. (U) According to media reports, the ROK has 18 or more patrol boats stationed in the area conducting "ship seizure" drills. Separately, National Security Advisor Song Min-soon was quoted as saying that: "The status of a foreign government vessel can be respected only when it keeps its dignity and politely behaves towards the sovereign state." Not surprisingly, media coverage of this matter remains intense, with all major outlets devoting extensive, sometimes bellicose coverage to the issue.

VERSHBOW